Moral(s) Support

Post 7.17.75

By Jeannette Smyth

L. Fletcher Prouty, who las week claimed that Alex- CIA's man in the White ander Butterfield was the House, stood in the door of the Rayburn House Office Building Tuesday night. "I'm missing myself on Cronkite for this party," he said.

Looking on was Cora Weiss, last heard from airlifiting private shipments to help rebuild North Vietnamese hospitals. Across the crowded room sat three children of Frank Olson, who died in 1953 after Central Intelligence Agency operatives laced his liqueur with a dose of LSD.

It was a strange, or strangely cheerful, gathering, depending on whether you regarded it as a testimonial or a wake. Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.), who leaked classified information about CIA operations in Chile, expected to be purged this week from the House Select Committee for Intelligence, and some 200 people showed up Tuesday night for a dinner in his honor.

All kinds of old rallying cries popped up during the reception and in the after dinner speeches — the support was strongly moral, if not political.

Marcus Raskin, co-director of the Institute of Policy Studies and a party sponsor, called up echoes of McCarthyism, which hunts and civil disobedience. Rep. Phillip Burton (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Remocratic Caucus, spoke of "very ugly forces in our society." Consumer advocate Ralph Nader spoke of account-ability and authoritarianism and said, "The basic issue is not a shadow of gray but good or virtue, crime or complicity." The Rev. WWilliam Wipler of the National Council of Churches' Latin American department spoke of witnessing: "One kind of support is a statement by people here that Harrington's action was not condemnable but commendable."

The three children of Frank Olson chatted briefly with Harrington. The Olson family plans to file a multi-million-dollar suit against the CIA for what they call the "wrongful death" of their father. "What's the statute of limitations problem? You had no inkling of this before?" asked Har-

[redacted] ward, a 29-year-old speech therapist, said she wasn't exactly sure what the statute of limitations was on hte 22-year-old case. She and her husband first read of the circumstances of an SD-connected death in newspaper accounts of the Rockefeller Commission report. "All the details fit what we knew about my father's death," she said. "It was in 1953, and he fell from the 10th story of a New York hotel after a meeting with CIA officials.

"At first we were reluctant to acknowledge that (the Commission Report) was about my fathre," Mrs. Hayward said, "to reopen things that had been closed for so many years. There was relief in knowing that my father didn't commit suicide willingly. Following that, there's the realization that his death had been unnecessary."

Eric Olson, 30, a Harvard graduate student, interrupted. "C'mon, Lisa," he smiled. "We said no more interviews, except for Rolling Stone."